

## by shmulia

1. Wanna Dance? (Nathanette)

Nathan doesn't mean to say the words so abruptly; they were a lot smoother in his head. Then again, everything is smoother in his head, from the lines he sketches on paper to the words which trip out of his mouth.

NathanÃ¶el was shading the ruffles on Rose's dress when Marinette moved into view. He couldn't fight the smile that formed on his face as she looked around the room, her gaze falling onto him after surveying the dancers. She waved at him, and NathanÃ¶el raised his pencil in response. Marinette's eyes snapped towards it, and her soft smile widened as she nodded in understanding.

The moving throng of people meant that Marinette couldn't stay still for long, and after a few seconds she was twirling around as Alya grabbed her friend's arm, pulling her back into the mass of dancers. Nathan's gaze lingered as he saw the periwinkle blue of Marinette's dress slip back into the crowd, and he wondered if he'd be able to draw the sparkle in her eyes when she smiled.

But NathanÆel couldn't keep his eyes on the paper as he tried to recall the tilt of Marinette's head when she looked at him; he searched for her in the crowd, the gentle sparkles sewn into her dress making her easy to find in the bright lights reflecting off of the disco ball hanging from the ceiling. His gaze switched between the paper in front of him and the girl weaving her way through the crowd as he drew, wishing that the monochrome of his drawings could show the warmth in Marinette's smile.

She'd flitted between her classmates like a butterfly throughout the evening, dancing briefly with everyone she could grab. That was the thing about Marinette; she could pull anyone, even Alix, into the midst of the dance floor with nothing but a grin. She had spent the first few dances with Alya, until Marinette pushed her friend - literally, Alya had nearly tripped over in her heels as Marinette thrust her forward - into Nino's arms, before grabbing hold of Ivan and spinning him round towards MylÆne.

Marinette had gone around the walls of the gym-turned-ballroom, pulling those waiting uncertainly at the sidelines into the fray of laughing classmates. NathanÆel smiled softly as he watched her pull Juleka, shy at the prospect of dancing, into the crowd. Unlike the previous classmates she'd dragged onto the dancefloor, Marinette stayed with Juleka until the taller girl smiled, bopping along to the peppy beat of the music. When Marinette removed her hands from Juleka's, she replaced them with one of Rose's. The blonde turned as she felt a hand embrace hers, eyebrows raised while her soft pink dress swirled gracefully around her knees, and Marinette winked and faded back into the crowd, leaving the two girls dancing happily.

NathanÆel wondered if they even realised what she was doing. It had taken him most of the night to figure it out, after all, and his friends weren't paying half as much attention to Marinette's actions as he was.

She was playing Cupid.

And she was doing it well.

It was subtle, with Marinette using the dynamics of their class to pair up their friends - even Alix and Kim didn't realise what was going on, as their partnership via Marinette became some sort of competitive dance-off, much to the amusement of those surrounding them. Marinette let out a soft laugh as she moved away from the pair, shaking her head so that her soft curls, let loose for the first time in front of her classmates, brushed over her shoulders.

It occurred to NathanÆel that Marinette herself wasn't properly dancing with anyone. She spun on the floor like a guest, accepted into the smaller groups before moving to another one moments later. Yes, she'd briefly danced with nearly everyone, but there was a distance in her smile as she took the hands of her classmates and paired them up. And with the number of individuals declining each time Marinette popped up to move another more than willing couple together, NathanÆel wondered if she was waiting for someone.

But the evening was ending soon, and as Marinette headed to the drinks table having successfully paired up most of her classmates -

she'd have a full set if Adrien and Chloé were around, but the two had been kept at some formal event their fathers insisted that they attend - Nathan had realised that he and Marinette were the only two people left who weren't-

Oh.

\_Oh.\_

He turned to shove the sketchbook in his bag, as the realization hit, pushing himself off of the bench as he dropped his satchel to the ground. He spun back around to face the dance floor to see Marinette moving towards him tentatively in her silver kitten heels. She stopped in front of him, smiling shyly as she tucked her loose hair behind her ear. Her mouth opened, but before Marinette could speak Nathan had already talking, his words rushed.

"Wanna dance?"

The question hangs in the air between them, and for a second Nathan thinks that he's got it completely wrong, that surely Marinette, sweet, pretty, kind Marinette wasn't actually coming over to him to ask him to \_dance\_.

But then she smiles, and it's like the sun splitting through rainclouds as Marinette's face lights up.

"Yeah," Marinette says, lacing her fingers through Nathan's and nodding. "Yeah, I do."

## 2. Don't throw that snowball! (DJ Wifi)

"Don't you dare throw that snowba- goddammit!"

Nino burst into laughter as Alya quickly ducked, cradling her phone to her chest as she curled her head down to avoid the snowball hurtling through the air. It whizzed over her without hitting its target, and Alya raised her head to glare at Nino once she'd determined that she was once again safe.

"Nino!" Alya called out, her eyes narrowed as she pushed her glasses back with the hand not holding her phone. "What the \_hell\_?"

Nino walked over to the bench Alya was sitting on, shoving his hands in the pockets of his trousers as he sauntered towards her.

"C'mon Alya, get off your phone and join me!" Nino perched himself onto the bench next to her whilst she scrolled down the screen of her phone, gripping it tightly in her gloved hands.

"I can't right now - there's an akuma attack, I've got to keep the Ladyblog updated!" Alya's eyes were back on the tiny screen in front of her as she typed rapidly, the small pads on the fingers of her gloves allowing the touchscreen on her phone to work despite the cloth covering her hands. "Ladybug and Chat Noir have just turned up, and I can't be there because of the snow! Damn, I won't be able to get an interview!" Alya turned to Nino, her lips quirked upwards into a mischievous grin. "You know, we're not \_that\_ far from the Louvre, if we ran we could probably get there by the end of the

fightâ€| "

Nino rolled his eyes as he shook his head.

"You want to sprint in the snow? Yeah, that'll end well. We aren't running off into the middle of an akuma fight, Alya â€" we said we'd meet Marinette and Adrien here, what'll they think if they turn up and we've disappeared?"

Alya raised her eyebrows. "Ladybug's appeared. Marinette will know where we've gone."

Nino let out a snort of laughter. "Okay, true. But still. They could be here any moment, and I'm pretty sure if we leave them on their own Marinette might self-combust."

Alya gave Nino a mostly fake frown, nudging him with her elbow as she shook her head.

"Hey, she's not that bad. Marinette's gotten a lot better with Adrien recently." Alya's eyes flicked to the little clock on the top of her phone screen as she refreshed the Ladyblog, letting out a soft sigh. "They're both pretty late though. Those two are definitely meant to be."

"I know, right? It's been half an hour, do you think we should call one ofâ€| them..." Nino's words trailed off as he looked down at Alya's phone, the screen exploding with notifications from fans sending in pictures of the akuma battle.

A look of concern formed on Nino's face as Alya's eyes widened, both of them putting the pieces together simultaneously. Alya's head snapped round to look at him as her mouth fell open slightly.

"You don't think-"

"They might be in the akuma attack?" Nino finished her sentence as Alya's voice faded. She nodded quickly, and Nino pulled his own phone out to check for any messages from his best friend. Nino looked back up at Alya, shaking his head as he saw he had no new messages. The look of concern on Alya's face told Nino that she hadn't heard from Marinette, either.

Nino scooted closer to Alya, carefully placing one arm over her shoulders and squeezing her to him in a gesture of reassurance.

"Hey, they'll be fine. Ladybug and Chat Noir have turned up, and they always save the day!" Nino's words were filled with a confidence he didn't quite feel; he knew he was right, but every new attack brought the fear of what if they can't beat this one?\_

It was something nobody could ever vocalise, because of course Ladybug and Chat Noir would win. They always won.

But Alya and Nino couldn't shake their sudden burst of nerves as they watched Alya's phone silently; she kept updating the blog, scanning the pictures to see if their best friends were in the crowd fleeing the scene. Alya glanced at Nino, his head close to hers as he leaned towards the phone in her hand, and bit her lip.

"We could still make it, go and see if we can find them-"

"Alya, \_no\_. Do you really think Ladybug wants people running straight into the path of the akuma? Look â€" she's using Lucky Charm, it's nearly over now, anyway."

Alya frowned as her eyes darted back to the latest post on the blog; sure enough, Ladybug had thrown her yo-yo into the air â€" Alya couldn't tell what she'd caught when it had transformed â€" but the updates were coming less frequently as Parisians moved away from the fight to guarantee their safety. For a moment, nothing was sent to the blog; Alya and Nino waited, silent tension seeping through them like the snow melting in their hair, until Alya pressed 'refresh' and pictures and videos began to burst through, her phone buzzing with the barrage of notifications the end of the fight brought with it.

Pictures of Ladybug awkwardly grinning as people tried to take a picture were deleted as Alya repeatedly pressed the little trash can icon; most of the photos looked the same, and there was only so many she could use on the blog. Nino felt Alya relax into him, the relief of \_they won, Marinette and Adrien will be alright\_ washing away the tension like snowmelt as she sorted through the images popping on her screen, occasionally saving the odd photo which was actually \_good.\_ Nino grinned as Alya saved a photo of Chat Noir sliding an arm around Ladybug and winking.

"Told you they'd save the day," Nino said softly. Alya bumped him with her shoulder, a reluctant smile growing on her face as she skimmed through the photos sent her way.

"Yeah, yeah, you were right. I'm gonna call Marinette and make sure she's okay."

Nino slipped his arm away off of Alya's shoulders as she pressed the phone to her ear, tugging off his gloves so he could send a text to Adrien.

\_Dude, you ok? Saw there was an akuma attack â€" tell me you're not dead.\_

A moment passed before Nino felt his phone buzz; he smiled in relief as he saw that the sender was his best friend.

\_I'm so sorry, I'm on my way! Got caught up in the akuma attack, but I'm definitely not dead. Are the three of you ok?\_

Nino let out of huff of relief, and turned to look at Alya.

"Hey, Adrien's ok, is Marinette-"

Alya gave Nino a thumbs up, and he could hear Marinette's voice through the connection speaking rapidly. Alya moved the phone away, chuckling as she covered the receiver.

"She hasn't even let me speak because she's apologising so much, but she's alright."

Nino returned the thumbs up, grinning, before sending a positive

reply to Adrien.

"Marinette, it's fine," Nino heard Alya say as she finally managed to interrupt her friend. "Girl, you were in an akuma attack, it's all good â€" Nino and I are still here, Adrien's on his way â€" No, he's late too â€" Well if you rush, maybe you'll get here before him â€" No, don't do that. If you fall and we have to take you to hospital, the snow day will kind of suck for everyone â€" Just get moving, we have a snowball fight to win! â€" Seriously, it's \_fine\_, I'm just glad you're alright â€" Okay, see you soon. Bye. Bye."

Alya was smiling as she pressed the end call button, and Nino raised an eyebrow as he pulled his gloves back on.

"So she's alright, I'm guessing?" He said. With a nod, Alya slipped her phone into her bag.

"Yeah. A bit shaken up from the attack, but she's on her way. And I've had a thoughtâ€|" Alya's smile twisted into a grin as she turned to face Nino, who leaned back slightly at the look on Alya's face.

"Uh-huh?" he said, nervousness lacing his words. Alya's grin widened.

"Well, we \_have\_ \_been\_ waiting here for a while. So we could get some revenge for our friends being so horrendously lateâ€|"

"They were in an \_akuma\_ \_attack\_."

"They wouldn't have been if they'd been on time." Alya pointed out, folding her arms across her chest. Nino raised a finger in protest before frowning. He paused as he thought about it, nodding in agreement as he realised that Alya was right.

"Okay, yeah. So what's the plan?"

Alya pointed towards a bush, just big enough to hide the two of them.

"We grab some snow, stock up on snowballs, and when the two of them have both arrived â€" we attack."

Nino crossed his arms as he began to nod.

"Harsh, but fair," he conceded. His eyes lit up as he grinned. "Let's make some snowballs, then. They'll be here soon!"

### 3. Silences (TikkiPlagg)

There are different kinds of silence.

The most familiar kind is the soft, musty silence of being hidden. Thrown into bags and pockets so that they're kept out of sight, Tikki and Plagg are all too familiar with the boredom the dusty silence brings; there's only so many times you can go through the items tucked into the crevices of a bag, after all, and pockets are even worse - apart from lint, there's little to keep a kwami entertained.

It's how they spend most of their time. The kwami don't blame Marinette or Adrien, of course; being kept a secret is the safest course of action for everyone involved, especially for Tikki and Plagg. So they resign themselves to the cushioned silence of hiding, and wait patiently for their Miraculous holders to let them out, back into a world of brightness and noise.

A silence they're just as familiar with is the tense stillness which comes with a lie. The world stops as the kwami bury themselves deeper into their hiding place before they stop moving, keeping as still as they possibly can. They know the faint sound of a hand brushing over the clasp of a bag to make sure it's shut properly, and the kwami know they're safe. The silence is usually broken by a laugh, with Marinette giving a just-believable excuse if someone sees her speaking to her bag. Adrien is more careful, never bringing Plagg out where he could be seen. But even then there are moments where Plagg becomes deathly still, pressed against Adrien's chest in the pocket of his shirt as Nino asks why Adrien has so much cheese in his fridge.

These silences are less frequent, especially as Marinette and Adrien get used to living their double lives; they learn when it's safe to let their kwami out into the air as time goes on, and the silence of lies become less frequent. But even though their miraculous holders adapt to their new abilities, there are some silences which never quite fade.

The cloying silence of midnight, when Marinette curls into a ball and tries to fight back the choking sobs threatening to overwhelm her, is a stab to Tikki's heart every time it envelopes them. Marinette tries to hide it, tries to keep her fears away from Tikki as she doesn't want to burden the kwami with her insecurities, with the thought that she's not good enough, it's too much, she's so tired. But Tikki knows; she gave Marinette the responsibility, and watches as the young girl fights for Paris, coping with more than anyone her age should have to. But she can't comfort Marinette. Words would only make it worse. Tikki's tried before, but sometimes only silence can soothe the burden of a superhero.

The quiet of midnight is cruel to Plagg, too; Adrien's worries that he'll let Ladybug down, that he's more of a hindrance than a help, weigh down on him like an anvil, and Plagg isn't enough to lift the pressure from his shoulders. Sometimes words of comfort help, but Plagg has never been good with reassurances. So the night passes, the only noise the faint passing of cars humming in the street as Plagg nuzzles against Adrien, trying to support him when there are no words to help.

Both kwami agree that those silences are the worst.

But one silence is a welcome change, and Tikki and Plagg are ecstatic when it finally comes about.

They're sitting on a counter in the Dupain-Cheng bakery, a plate of snacks in front of them. Cheese, bread, and cookies are scattered on the stark white ceramic of the plate, and the kwami are enjoying being able to take their time to recuperate for once. It was a long battle - for everyone.

Adrien and Marinette are upstairs, having requested some privacy whilst they talk aboutâ€| well, everything.

The revelation was a shock to them both. It had taken days for the pair to put their awkwardness aside and actually talk about what the reveal of their identities meant for them â€" as partners, as friends. As whatever else they were, now that the veil of secrecy had been lifted between them.

Tikki and Plagg were more than happy to oblige. After so much time spent apart, there's a lot of catching up for the kwami to do. So many things to discuss; there are plans to be made, strategies to be developed now that Ladybug and Chat Noir would finally be a proper team.

But that can wait. Because right now, the kwami stop to enjoy the rarest kind of silence: that of comfort, of reassurance, which has wrapped around them like a soft blanket after a long day. The scent of food wafts around them, Plagg's head resting against Tikki's as he purrs contentedly, the only noise in the gentle calm of their reunion.

Separation is never easy, but being reunited was like coming home. And as they sit, content with each other's company after so long apart, Tikki and Plagg don't have to speak.

There will be time for words later; for now, silence is all they need.

End  
file.